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ABSTRACT

This report was undertaken to determine whether or not a particular approach to group guidance was as effective as a more traditional, individual approach to helping students to move toward the selection of an academic major or vocational choice. Subjects were students at Brigham Young University who requested vocational counseling. The Process was the same for both the experimental and control groups, except for the change in the experimental group to group counseling rather than individual counseling. The findings of the study support the hypothesis that group guidance can be as effective, and make more efficient use of the counselor's time than does individual guidance. In addition, subject satisfaction can be as good when guidance is given in groups as when given individually. (KJ)

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AN INDIVIDUAL AND A GROUP APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

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The purpose of this paper is to report the evaluation of a demonstration research project that compared two educational-vocational approaches to guidance.

The project was undertaken to determine whether or not a particualr approach to group guidance was as effective as a more traditional, individual approach in helping students to move toward the selection of an academic major or vocational choice. It also attempted to determine to what extent the client was satisfied with the guidance he received.

Background

Research reporting the benefits of group counseling and psychotherapy are numerous. To cover all that has been reported in a review of the literature would be both cumbersome and impractical. For purposes of this study, focus will be drawn to articles more directly related to vocational and educational guidance or counseling.

The literature reports research that compares group and individual counseling approaches of test interpretation (Wright, 1963, Folds and Gadga, 1966), the effects of reinforcement on information seeking behavior, (Krumboltz and Thoresen, 1964), the effects of group and individual counseling when working with college underachievers (Chestnut, 1965; Gilbreath, 1967) and perceptual change which occurred from educational and vocational counseling (Catron, 1966). In most studies group

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approaches were at least as effective as a corresponding individual approach.

Information concerning the specific use of groups in educational and vocational guidance is very limited. One study reported by Hoyt (1955), considered four objectives pertinent to vocational guidance. The study was designed to compare a group and individual approach with each other and with a control group. It was reported that the Ss assigned to the group or individual guidance obtained significantly better results on the criterion, which were, (a) satisfaction with vocational choice, (b) certainty of vocational choice, (c) realism of vocational choice and (d) appropriateness of certainty in terms of realism, (Hoyt, 1955, p. 28-29) than did a control group.

Hewer, (1959) in an attempt to consider similar criterion to those of Hoyt, (1955), had difficulty with the mechanics of her procedure and the analysis of her data was incomplete and inconclusive.

Sprague and Strong, (1970) used an approach evolved from Hewer's (1959) earlier work and found general client satisfaction. In this study, each S agreed to participate with an assigned group of students for a period of nine weeks, thus assuring each participating S one period to present a self prepared case study of himself, after which he was able to get suggestions and help from the other members of the group.

The percentage of students who seek educational and vocational guidance is high. The findings of a survey at

Brigham Young University are very similar to those reported by Hewer (1968), which indicates that approximately 60 to 70 percent of the students who come to counseling do so to get educational or vocational assistance, although students seeking such help are only seen in two or three interviews. The increased enrollment at many universities and colleges is making it necessary that more operational models and techniques for group educational and vocational guidance be developed to provide the assistance that is needed. To meet this need, the models and techniques that evolve must have flexibility and meet the objectives of the Ss.

Subjects

The Ss for this study were students who came to the Brigham Young University Counseling Center requesting help in selecting an academic major or in choosing a vocation. In selecting the Ss, no attempt was made to control for sex, academic standing or age.

Instruments

Only Ss who requested counseling assistance through normal channels were included in this study. Subjects were randomly assigned to receive group or individual counseling after the Counseling Center receptionist screened those who met the following conditions:

1. They requested counseling help in selecting an academic major or vocation.
2. They requested some vocational tests to assist them with their planning.

3. Their schedule would meet an available appointment period of the counselor doing the research.

To control for counselor variance, all Ss in the sample were given appointments with the same counselor. All Ss included in the study were administered the Crites Vocational Development Inventory (CVDI) as a pre test just prior to meeting the counselor for the first time, and as a post test along with the satisfaction questionnaire at the conclusion of the counseling experience.

During the first interview, the Ss were given an opportunity to select the tests that they thought would be most helpful to them in selecting a goal for themselves. In order for them to do this, the counselor explained what kind of information could be expected from each test, and how long it would take to complete it. The Ss were also informed that there would be no charge for any of the tests that they desired to take. This procedure was followed for Ss in both approaches. Since nearly every S took either the Strong Vocational Interest Blank (SVIB) or the Kuder DD, and the processing time for these instruments is approximately two weeks, all Ss were instructed to return for the second interview two weeks after the first. If the S desired subsequent appointments, they were scheduled at weekly intervals or as the counselor's schedule would permit. The initial interview for both approaches was approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length.

The Ss who received individual counseling were taken into the counselor's office, where rapport was established, the client stated his problem, and the client and counselor

focused on approaches for resolving the problem. Test selection was accomplished as outlined above.

At the second interview, the S was given full access to the data obtained from the testing and was encouraged to ask questions and offer comments while the counselor provided an interpretation of the data. This approach permitted an open discussion between the counselor and the counselee. Each S was seen as many times as he felt it was beneficial. Subsequent appointments, if desired,were scheduled as outlined above.

Subjects who were given group appointments were handled in the same manner as those who received individual counseling, except, instead of using the counselor's office, they were taken to a larger room equipped with a table and chairs that permitted all to be seated. After introductions, the establishment of rapport and the answering of preliminary questions, each S selected the tests he desired as outlined above. Questions were encouraged from the Ss during all portions of the counseling period. Ss who participated in the groups were requested to speak with the counselor if they desired to take individual or clinical diagnostic tests such as the Rorschach, T.A.T., MMPI, WAIS or etc. These instruments were made available to the Ss if it seemed to be of benefit to them. Scheduling for the second and subsequent interviews was as outlined above.

At the second interview, each S was presented with a folder containing his test data. The counselor interpreted the tests that were most common first, and then enterpreted

the least common instruments later in the hour. The Ss were invited to raise questions or make comments about each instrument as it was discussed. In some instances only one S would have taken an instrument, but there was no problem in discussing the particular instrument with him in the group. If a S had a particular question he wanted to discuss individually, he was invited to do so at the end of the interview period, or individually by appointment. The Ss who participated in the group approach were encouraged to seek individual help if needed. The second interview was scheduled to last one hour, but frequently ran over time as the Ss would get into discussions among themselves. It was considered to be group counseling when a minimum of two Ss met with the counselor, however, the maximum number of students in any one group never exceeded eight Ss.

A one way analysis of variance was computed to determine if there was a significant difference between the groups and between the pretest and post test for Crites Vocational Attitude Inventory. To test for significant difference on the locally developed satisfaction questionnaire Chi Squares were computed using the ANSTAT program as adapted to the 360/50 IBM Computer.

Results

Pretest means on the CVID for those assigned to the individual approach was 38.8 and 38.5 for those assigned to the group approach. Post test means on the CVID were 40.5 for the individual approach and 38.6 for the group approach. Although slightly better gains were obtained by those in the

individual approach, the difference was not significant.

The Ss responded to eight statements on the satisfaction questionnaire, which was designed to measure the help they personally felt was received in different aspects of the counseling process. Each statement had alterratives ranging from one to six, which represented a continuum from positive to negative benefit. Of the eight statements, only one had significant difference for the two approaches. The significantly different statement read thus, "I gained considerable understanding from the tests I took" (the positive side), and "I gained nothing from the tests I took" (the negative side). The responses indicated that those in the individaul approach gained slightly better understanding than did the Ss in the group approach.

One of the objectives of group guidance or counseling is more efficient use of the counselor's time. It was observed in this study that those who received individaul help were seen on an average of 2.5 appointments, while those who received help in the group were seen an average of 2.03 appointments. By comparison, those who received both individual and group counseling were seen an average of 2.3 appointments. This would suggest that a two way savings of counselor time was made with the group approach.

Eighty-one percent of the total Ss included in this study stated they would like to receive both individual and group educational and vocational counseling. When analyzed by approaches, 66% of those who received individual

counseling desired both approaches and 82% of those who received group counseling desired both approaches. All Ss who received both individual and group counseling desired both.

Discussion

The analyzed data from this study would support the findings from earlier research, that a group approach does not reduce the effectiveness of counseling. The resultant differences between the group and individual approaches were insignificant. Even the one statement which was significantly different at the .05 level of confidence had 70% of the Ss in the group approach who were more satisfied with the experience than were dissatisfied, as compared with 91% of those who were counseled individually.

Responses from Ss assigned to the group approach suggest benefits that were not measured. Typical comments from those in the group approach are as follows: "It helped me to see how others were approaching the selection of a major or occupation." "Their ideas have given me some new thoughts on what I'm going to do." "I like to select the tests that I'm going to take, it takes the mystery out of them and helps me understand what is going on." I'd heard that it would be a week or ten days before I could get an appointment to see a counselor, I was pleasantly surprised to get to see one in a couple of days."

The group approach was not without criticism. The most common was the shortage of time the counselor had to spend in

interpreting tests, answering questions and giving information. All questions were given attention and answers appeared to be satisfactory,but, evidently, the Ss would like to have felt they were not being as rushed. It is felt that this criticism could be minimized if two hours instead of one had been scheduled for the second and subsequent interviews, or if an additional counselor had been utilized to help with questions and problems. In an earlier pilot study, which was not evaluated, two counselors were engaged using this approach, and the problem of insufficient counselor time did not seem to be a problem.

The use of this type of approach for providing group guidance seems to be effective. It provides an effective and efficient means for offering educational and vocational guidance to the S who does not want to get involved in a lengthy group experience. It furnishes test data to confirm a decision that has been made, or information about opportunities that are available. It is not seen as a short cut to replace or reduce the importance of the in depth experience that can be gained from an extended vocational group experience.

Summary

The findings of this study support the findings of earlier studies, that group guidance can be as effective, and make more efficient use of the counselor's time than does individual guidance. In addition to this, S satisfaction can be as great when guidance is given in groups as when given individually. Some qualities of "affect" are found in group guidance which

are not present in individual guidance. In order to get the most benefit from group guidance, it is important to allow sufficient time to adequately deal with all of the data which are present. It is also suggested that even though group guidance is equally as effective as individual guidance and more efficient with the counselors time, that it is important to the student that he be able to receive some individual help if needed.

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